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# Afghanistan Situation Report

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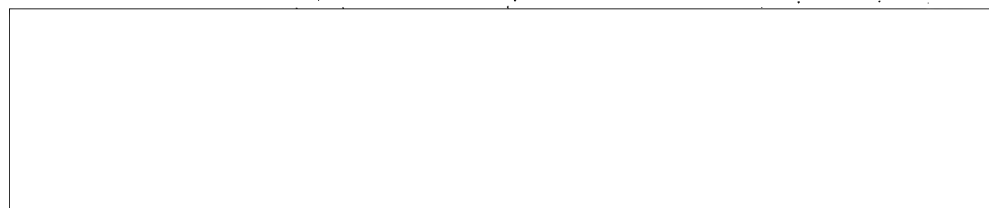
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## AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

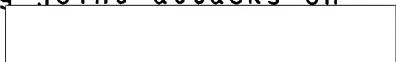
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## INSURGENT SQUABBLING AND COOPERATION

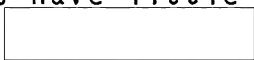
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Insurgents from Pushtun tribes are bickering in Qandahar while two feuding insurgent groups in Helmand Province are staging joint attacks on Soviet and regime convoys. 

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## DETERIORATING CONDITIONS IN TAKHAR PROVINCE

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Conditions have deteriorated in Takhar Province and Afghan Government programs have little influence on the population. 

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## AHMAD SHAH MASOOD: A LEADER FOR THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE?

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Panjsher Valley commander Masood may be the insurgent leader most capable of developing widespread cooperation among the guerrilla factions in Afghanistan. Masood's uneven success in building alliances, however, indicates that achieving major gains in insurgent cooperation will be a long-term process. 

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**INSURGENT SQUABBLING AND COOPERATION**

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divisions arose among Pushtun insurgents in the Qandahar area in late February. The rival Durrani and Ghilzai groups, which have operated in a loose confederation for the past five years, split over accusations of thievery and extortion

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The groups have agreed to convene a court to resolve the differences.

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in Helmand Province insurgents allied with Nabi's Harakat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami and Gulbuddin's faction of the Hizbi Islami have ended three years of fighting with each other and have begun cooperating in staging attacks on Soviet and regime convoys on the highway from Qandahar to Herat.

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**Comment:** Insurgents in the Qandahar area have generally been successful in maintaining cooperation and have remained active in attacking Soviet and regime positions despite frequent sweep operations against them. An increase in attacks on convoys in Helmand Province probably will draw some pressure off the Qandahar insurgents and would enable them to operate more effectively once their current differences are resolved.

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**DETERIORATING CONDITIONS IN TAKHAR PROVINCE**

A US Embassy source in Kabul reports conditions in Takhar Province have deteriorated over the past three years. fighting, fear of air attacks, and conscription drives by the regime and the insurgents have driven many farmers from their land, and canals and cropland have fallen into disuse. The food situation, however, was reported to be adequate in Taloqan, the provincial capital, because resupplies were trucked in, probably from Kabul. the regime's land reform program is nonexistent and few people attend literacy courses. KHAD personnel--who are greatly feared and often feud with local militia--enforce the government's authority.

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- [redacted] Interior  
Ministry officials believe that the Soviets have  
ceased interfering in disputes between the  
Parcham and Khalq factions of the PDPA. The  
Soviets continue to insist, however, that both  
factions attend all party meetings. [redacted]

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- Tehran radio has reported the merger of four  
Afghan insurgent organizations that espouse the  
principle of "neither East nor West" in  
advancing the Islamic cause. Sazman-i Nasr is  
the only one of the groups with significant  
influence. The others are Goruh-i Pasdaran-i  
Jahad-i Islami, Nehzat-i Islami-i Afghanistan,  
and Jabhe-i Mottahed-i Inqilab-i Islami. [redacted]

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- UN Negotiator Cordovez told a senior US official  
he is very pessimistic about the May round of  
Afghan peace talks. He believes neither the  
Afghans nor the Pakistanis are enthusiastic  
about continuing the process and speculates the  
next round might never take place. [redacted]

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- Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Dixit, whose  
sympathies have been with the Soviets, will be  
leaving Kabul in April or early May to become  
Ambassador to Sri Lanka, according to the US  
Embassy in Kabul. [redacted]

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## PERSPECTIVE

AHMAD SHAH MASOOD: A LEADER FOR THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE? [REDACTED]

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Panjsher Valley insurgent commander Ahmad Shah Masood--head of the Jamiat-i-Islami party insurgents in Kapisa Province--may be the insurgent leader most capable of developing widespread cooperation among the guerrilla factions inside Afghanistan. Masood has made extraordinary efforts to expand his organization and build alliances. The unevenness of his success, however, clearly shows that achieving major gains in insurgent cooperation will be a long-term process. [REDACTED]

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Building Cooperation

Masood's plans for developing cooperation cover the non-Pushtun areas of the northeastern provinces--Balkh, Samangan, Konduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa, Laghman, and Konarha--and he has concentrated on areas adjacent to the Panjsher Valley. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Masood offers military training, weaponry, and organizational expertise to induce cooperation, although he has also used military force on occasion. Masood observed that the Soviet offensive, last spring, had interrupted his efforts to strengthen ties, but he claimed to have gained control of several groups--mainly Jamiat--in Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces.

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We believe Soviet military pressure has helped Masood expand cooperation and overcome some of the longstanding enmity between the Jamiat and various Hizbi Islami groups. (Hizbi Islami, like the Jamiat party, belongs to the fundamentalist alliance but is more rigid and uncompromising than the Jamiat. Of the two Hizbi factions, the more rigid is led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the less rigid by Yunus Khalis.) [REDACTED]

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A senior Hizbi Islami official of the Gulbuddin faction said last May that Panjsher VII caused nine groups to gather near the Panjsher Valley to cooperate in the fight against the Soviet and Afghan regime forces. A

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### Obstacles to Effective Alliances

In our view, Masood's difficulties in extending ties with other insurgent groups arise from several factors. [REDACTED]

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Masood considers his differences with Gulbuddin to be the main impediment to an expansion of alliances. Although Masood has good relations with Hizbi Islami groups in the Gulbuddin faction, others have continued to disrupt his supply lines and attack his men. [REDACTED]

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### Cultural and Ethnic Differences

The cultural isolation and low social status of Panjsheris, who are Tajiks, probably inhibit non-Panjsheris from accepting Masood's leadership and may impede others' willingness to form alliances with him. [REDACTED] the Panjsheris' social status is only slightly above that of the Hazaras, who serve in the most menial occupations and are discriminated against because of their Mongoloid features and Shiite religion. According to an Afghan academician, Pushtuns are willing to intermingle with all Central Tajik groups except the Panjsheris. Though Tajiks are detribalized, their local loyalties may be as strong as Pushtun tribesmen's and their outlooks as parochial, according to Western academicians. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Religious differences with fundamentalists have also impeded Masood's efforts to extend his power.

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[REDACTED] conservative mullahs have opposed Masood because of his willingness to negotiate with the Soviets.

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### Political Competition, Rivalry

We believe that because most areas of Afghanistan have become organized by or affiliated with one group of insurgents or another, Masood's goal of establishing new bases has grown more difficult to fulfill. Even among Tajiks and Uzbeks--the ethnic groups most likely to ally with Panjsher Tajiks--Masood faces difficulties. In Faryab Province in 1982 and 1983, for example, fighting broke out after organizers from one group tried to establish bases of support in villages where other groups were already established.

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[REDACTED] One group soon devoted its efforts to intimidating groups that were less well armed and to frustrating their attacks on government positions.

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Rivalries--including some that were aggravated by Masood's truce with the Soviets during 1983--have also hampered Masood's efforts. Abdul Haq, the influential commander of the Hizbi Islami faction of Khalis in Kabul Province, said that he viewed the truce as collusion with the Soviets.

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[REDACTED] the Jamiat commander in Laghman Province was unhelpful to Masood because last summer he was preoccupied with a struggle against a Hizbi Islami rival.

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[REDACTED] In Kapisa Province civilians were withholding cooperation with insurgents until they could see a winner emerge in the Panjsher insurgents' struggle against local Hizbe Islami commanders.

[REDACTED] the Soviets and the Afghan regime attempt to exploit rivalries by bribery and spreading falsehoods.

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Poor Tactics: The Andarab Valley

[redacted] Masood as having grown more aware of the need for civilian support and more careful in his diplomacy, earlier errors of judgment may still be costing him support and hampering his efforts, especially in the Andarab Valley. Strategically one of the most important areas adjoining the Panjsher Valley, the Andarab offers access to the Panjsher insurgents' rear base at Khost-e Fereng as well as an abundant source of food. [redacted]

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[redacted] Masood first sought control of passes into the region and provided arms to poor farmers and villagers in the tributary valleys to obtain their support. These tactics aroused the suspicions of the ruling landowners, who believed Masood planned to subdue the valley by force. Masood next tried to recruit a local insurgent whom the landowners believed to have ties to the Soviets, causing the traditional leaders to perceive Masood as a leftist and fear losing their property and influence. Their subsequent support for the Hizbi Gulbuddin faction has continued to plague Masood. Last fall Kabul media reported that the Hizbi Islami Gulbuddin commander in the Andarab had defected to the regime.

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Even if Masood had used better judgment, he would have faced several obstacles to winning the support of the Andarab Valley inhabitants. [redacted]

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[redacted] a wide valley floor and low mountain crests leave the Andarab--unlike the Panjsher--highly vulnerable to air and ground attacks, and fear of retaliation has made the inhabitants reluctant to participate actively in the insurgency. [redacted]

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[redacted] Andarab Valley residents include few former urban dwellers, and the residents have maintained their traditional suspicion of outsiders. Another obstacle for Masood was that the valley had already been organized by Hizbi Islami insurgents of the Gulbuddin faction and a moderate group before he began his efforts. [redacted]

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**Outlook**

Cooperation among insurgents inside Afghanistan--even in areas with a strong leader such as Masood and even with an increased Soviet military presence--will probably continue to evolve only gradually. Masood's efforts to achieve a coordinated, interregional insurgency will continue to be hampered by personal, ideological, religious, cultural, and ethnic differences. Soviet and Afghan regime attempts to exploit those differences will also slow the development of alliances. If Masood were to die, the alliances he has established would probably have to be renegotiated by his successor.

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